

Delta Levees and Habitat Advisory Committee

Friday, July 11, 2003

Room 435, Resources Building

Draft Meeting Notes

1. Welcome/Self Introductions/ Announcements

Bob Orcutt of the Department of Fish and Game called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Those in attendance introduced themselves. The list of attendees is attached.

2. Minutes from last meeting

The minutes of the June 6, 2003 were approved as presented.

3. Update on CALFED Levee SB 34/AB 360 Program

Curt Schmutte of The Department of Water Resources reported that the Water Resources Development Act of 2003 was introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R. 2557). It includes a section directing the Corps of Engineers to conduct a study of the feasibility if the beneficial use of dredged material from the San Francisco Bay on Sherman Island (see handout #1).

An on-site briefing of the Dutch Slough Ecosystem Restoration project is planned for July 15. Those interested in attending should contact Curt. The 1200 acre project is funded by \$23 million from CALFED and \$5 million from the Coastal Conservancy. DWR has received \$0.5 million for levee maintenance and related work. The Contra Costa County Local Area Formation Commission approved formation of a new reclamation district on two of the parcels. Acquisition of the real estate is almost complete. The construction project will result in a tidal wetland with significant topographical diversity. Preliminary modeling shows that the project will result in no significant change to water quality. The Dutch Slough property is west of Reclamation District 799, and north of the Contra Costa canal. This funding covers the first three years of the project, DWR will own and manage the land in the first three years as an agricultural operation. For long-term management of the project, the State Coastal Conservancy and DWR are conducting a consultant selection process. Public access issues will be considered as part of this process.

The North Delta Flood Ecosystem Project is on track with the draft EIR/EIS being developed by Jones and Stokes Associates. The project should result in reduced flooding of Interstate 5. It involves changes to the McCormack-Williamson Tract with downstream storage to mitigate increased flows. DWR is consulting with scientists from UC Davis on the complex ecosystem issues. Final modeling has not been released.

Tom Zuckerman advised that Curt contact the Delta Protection Commission with a report on this project, since there has been concern about using Staten Island for permanent water storage. Curt predicted that within a few weeks or months there will

be a significant level of information, including modeling, available. Gil Cosio of MBK Engineers noted that the protected status of the Sandhill Crane dictates that this land's use should be predominantly agriculture. Curt reported that the Corps of Engineers is requesting a time extension and additional funding to complete their portion of the study. The time delay is problematic, but cost share can be absorbed as in-kind services with funding out of North Delta program. Pete Rabbon of the Reclamation Board noted that this issue will come before the Board next week for approval. The Reclamation Board meets the 3rd Friday of every month (except August).

Curt is seeking feedback on the Franks Tract project. Anyone interested should contact Curt.

Kent Nelson of DWR continued the report. Phase 2 of the Decker Island Project involves the removal of dredged material that was deposited on Decker to be taken for beneficial reuse in an adjacent area. The property will be contoured to create a sea-level tidal wetland. The contractor for the CEQA document is Stillwater Environmental Services. A draft report was released to the project team for review. No significant problems have been noted. The project team is meeting with fisheries and aquatics resources experts to ensure that it is a beneficial project. Phases 1 and 2 involved 34 acres; the remaining acreage is 470 for phase 3. In addition to participants from the Department of Water Resources, Lauren Hastings of CALFED and Marina Brand of the Department of Fish and Game are involved in this project. Construction should begin in September and will take approximately six months to complete.

The Decker Phase 1 project included fish monitoring; phase 2 will take a more scientific approach, working with scientists from the Department of Fish and Game, CALFED, and the UC system. Discussion with the other CALFED subcommittees should begin in October.

Dave Mraz of DWR provided a copy of the monthly Subventions Report, included as Handout #2 (attached).

Dave outlined a draft proposed CALFED budget concept for the Delta Levee System Integrity Program. His proposal would use Proposition 50 bond funding to assure a fully funded Subventions Program for Years 2 through 6. This could be done by supplementing the Year 2 and Year 3 claims with Bond funds. The supplement would place participating Reclamation Districts in a better position to increase maintenance, repair, and restoration of the Delta's levees. Based on funding that is in the Governor's budget and the proposed cash flow, Proposition 50 would provide a fully funded Subventions program for a total of 5 years. The steady funding will allow the

Reclamation Districts to develop and implement a more aggressive levee maintenance and repair program and to work on deferred projects.

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After discussion, those in attendance approved of taking the concept to the Reclamation Board for approval.

4. Update on Department of Fish and Game AB 360 Activities

Bob Orcutt reported that DFG is assisting on the Decker Island Phase II Project. One hurdle that the Van Sickle Island portion of the project may have is a population of Salt Marsh Harvest mice which are federally and state listed, and state protected, which means that they can't be impacted. The Jersey and Bradford islands portion of the project don't have any significant environmental issues. Bob will facilitate fisheries input for the design of the channels for Phase II. He pointed out that it's difficult to design shallow water habitat at this location without encouraging non-native species. Phase II is relying on the same levee opening as Phase I.

DFG is continuing to work with the Reclamation District and DWR on the Bradford Island planting and monitoring plans.